



Groundwater Sustainability Plan Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP)?

A: A Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) outlines how a basin will avoid the adverse effects of groundwater overdraft and achieve sustainable levels of groundwater. The GSP includes a physical description of the groundwater management area including groundwater conditions, a water budget, sustainability criteria, a monitoring program, and projects and measurable objectives to become sustainable by 2040.

Q: Why did MAGSA develop a GSP?

A: The GSP is a requirement of the 2014 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). The State law requires all high- and medium-priority basin Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) to develop and implement a GSP. The GSP was submitted on January 28 to the CA Department of Water Resources (DWR) for their review to meet the January 31, 2020 deadline.

Q: How did GSP development take into account the interests of all stakeholders?

A: MAGSA held numerous public meetings and actively solicited feedback from stakeholders throughout the GSP development process. This included Board Meetings, GSP update meetings, workshops, webinars, and surveys. The full GSP draft was made available to the public in July 2019 for a 90-day review and comment period concluding with a Public Hearing on October 16, 2019. MAGSA will continue to consider any and all input from stakeholders through the Stakeholder Committee and other channels on an ongoing basis.

Q: Who determines whether MAGSA's GSP is sufficient?

A: Upon receipt, DWR put up the GSP on DWR's Groundwater Portal for an additional 75-day public comment period. DWR has two years from the submittal date to thoroughly review the GSP to determine whether it meets the requirements of SGMA.

Q: When does MAGSA have to start implementing the GSP?

A: Implementation started immediately upon submittal of the GSP to the CA Department of Water Resources (DWR). As set forth in the SGMA legislation, completion of this action immediately and fully vested all of the oversight and enforcement powers of a GSA with the MAGSA. The MAGSA Board and Staff has already begun working to achieve the Phase 1 target amount of a 10% reduction in overdraft, or 9,110 acre feet, by 2025. This will be done through implementing management actions, projects and programs identified in the GSP. These may include enhanced efficiency irrigation conservation practices, a robust data gathering and management system, and/or a water marketing program, among others.



Q: Does the GSP take away the ability of growers to pump groundwater if we enter a period of drought?

A: The MAGSA Board will prioritize project implementation that will increase water supply in wet years to offset groundwater overdraft. The sustainable management criteria in the GSP include a range called “operational flexibility.” This allows fluctuating groundwater levels as long as levels recover and improve over the long run. However, under the SGMA law MAGSA has the power to limit groundwater pumping to achieve sustainability. If groundwater pumping continues to decrease groundwater levels at an unsustainable rate, MAGSA may consider limiting pumping. MAGSA is seriously considering a water marketing program that allows landowners to buy and sell groundwater, allowing flexibility during times of limited supply.

Q: What are some strategies the GSP outlines to achieve sustainability?

A: In its GSP, the Board has adopted a phased approach to sustainability, allowing MAGSA landowners room to adjust and continue to thrive over the 20-year implementation period. The goal of reducing groundwater overdraft by 91,000 acre feet has been divided into phases. The Phase 1 target amount is a 10% reduction, or 9,110 acre feet, by 2025. The GSP outlines various projects and management actions that either increase water supply or reduce water demand. This includes groundwater recharge basins, on-farm recharge, and a water marketing program among others.

Q: Will I be required to put a meter on my well?

A: Although highly recommended as a best management practice, installing meters on wells is not a requirement at this time. Every landowner should investigate installing a meter for their own benefit and protection. MAGSA will conduct a series of pilot projects to determine recommended hardware for metering purposes. A meter allows landowners to accurately assess and defend their actual water use and will allow for participation in any future water marketing programs. Requiring the installation of meters on wells will likely be considered sometime during the first 5 years of GSP implementation.

Q: Why are meters being considered as a management action in MAGSA?

A: MAGSA’s priority is to manage groundwater resources with the best data possible. Efforts to improve data collection have already begun. MAGSA must develop defensible data to adequately defend MAGSA owners from intervention by the State. From a landowner’s perspective, all should immediately begin to investigate available resources for installing a meter for their own benefit and protection. A meter allows landowners to accurately assess, manage and defend their actual water use and allows for participation in any future water marketing programs.

Q: How will meters be implemented?

A: MAGSA staff are already assessing potential cost-sharing programs, interest-free loans, or other mechanisms that could be made available to landowners to install a meter; all of which will depend upon landowner/stakeholder feedback and MAGSA Board approval. **Q: Will I be limited on how much I can pump?**



A: That depends. The SGMA law does grant MAGSA the power and authority to limit groundwater pumping to achieve sustainability. However, the first priority of the Board is to collect groundwater use data and increase water supply. If supply-side solutions and water use efficiency are not enough to achieve sustainability goals and groundwater pumping continues to decrease groundwater levels at an unsustainable rate, MAGSA may be forced to consider limiting pumping.

Q: Who will implement and require management actions?

A: The MAGSA Board will consider potential management actions included in the GSP as needed. MAGSA is the local implementation authority for the landowners within its service area boundaries. The Board strongly encourages involvement and input by landowners and stakeholders as they consider the most effective groundwater sustainability programs that can immediately be implemented.

Q: How will projects in the GSP be prioritized?

A: Projects are prioritized based on water availability and security. For example, if an entity is willing to sell water to MAGSA for use in a recharge facility, that project would receive high priority. Overall project cost and benefit also play a large role in project prioritization.

Q: If I own land in different areas of MAGSA, will I have to follow different rules?

A: All landowners within the MAGSA will be treated equitably. If you own land in different regions of the agency, you currently will not be required to follow different management policies.

Q: How will MAGSA accurately track water usage within its service area?

A: MAGSA's first priority for GSP implementation is to increase groundwater data availability and reliability. MAGSA may require installing meters on wells within the first 5 years of GSP implementation. MAGSA is seriously looking at a water marketing system that cannot be implemented without accurate metering of extractions. Although not currently required, it would be optimal for as many wells as possible to have meters at the earliest possible date.

Q: Will there be an AF/acre groundwater allocation?

A: Initially, MAGSA does not expect to allocate the water supply. MAGSA is focusing on improving its groundwater data and will prioritize water resource development through projects to reduce the total overdraft before considering a per acre allocation.

Q: How will the Kings Subbasin coordinate to achieve Subbasin-wide sustainability?

A: Each GSA within the Kings Subbasin developed its own Groundwater Sustainability Plan. As required by SGMA, MAGSA is working alongside the neighboring six GSAs in the Kings Subbasin under the terms of a basin coordination agreement that aligns sustainability goals. This coordination agreement was submitted to the CA Department of Water Resources for review at the same time GSPs were submitted.

Q: Will there be any incentives programs available to landowners who implement GSA programs down the road?



A: Incentives will certainly be considered to encourage accelerated landowner participation in MAGSA's management actions. There are no specific programs in place at this time. Any number of incentives will be considered by the MAGSA Board as appropriate during the entire period of GSP implementation.

Q: What should landowners do now during the next 1-5 years to be prepared for GSP implementation?

A: The best way landowners can prepare is to stay engaged with MAGSA's activities, thereby allowing an opportunity to provide input on future project and management action consideration and development. Landowners can stay up to date by signing up for the Interested Persons email list online at www.mcmullinarea.org, attending Board Meetings, attending public workshops, and by expressing priorities, ideas, and input on project and management action decisions.

Q: Will there be any other costs to landowners beyond the \$19/acre Prop 218 assessment?

A: The cost of developing and constructing specific projects and acquiring surface water supply was not included in the initial Proposition 218 \$19/acre assessment rate. Moving forward over the next 20 years, MAGSA will continue to apply for grant funding to cover as many costs as possible and will seek out long term loans for the more expensive projects. Even with these additional funds, MAGSA may need to consider other funding mechanisms, such as pumping fees, in addition to land-based assessments to cover the anticipated costs of success in achieving sustainability!